Applauds Delaware County Community College's Commitment to STEM Education

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Media, PA – Long an advocate of strengthening our nation's technical education programs, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) congratulated Delaware County Community College on the grand opening of its Advanced Technology Center. The ceremony took place a year and a half after the Congressman presented $170,000 in funding – which he worked to successfully appropriate for Fiscal Year 2008 – at the groundbreaking ceremony for what will be a two-building complex. Coursework at the new facility will develop students' skills in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields to prepare them for the globally-competitive 21st century economy.

"Our community colleges represent a critical part of our higher education system and play a considerable role in ensuring our workforce has the skills it needs to fulfill our nation's economic potential," said Congressman Sestak, who has met on numerous occasions with College President Dr. Jerome Parker about ways to better train our next generation of workers.

"I commend Dr. Parker and his colleagues for their dedication to this project as a whole. Specifically they understand their role in rebuilding our economy by adapting course offerings to fit emerging career opportunities, as demonstrated by their focus on green technologies in this center. In my District, clean energy companies like Conergy and Iberdrola have already created hundreds of new jobs. If passed, the climate change bill I worked on in the House will be an engine for driving job growth and American innovation, creating about 1.7 million more jobs -- 71,500 here in Pennsylvania."

Programs at the Advanced Technology Center will include traditional trade and technical offerings, such as automotive, electrical and welding, as well advanced technology classes in electronics, robotics and nanofabrication. Green technology coursework will include instruction on weatherization, green roof construction and geothermal heating and cooling systems.

"As we work to provide the needed incentives to spur growth in America's green industries, we must remember that start-up wind, solar, geothermal and other alternative energy companies will only fully prosper if they can build with a workforce that has the requisite ability in science and math," said Congressman Sestak. "For example, graduates of degrees offered through classes at this center will have the opportunity to work on projects such as the one I have worked to fund at West Chester University, where that school has undertaken a major geothermal installation for its heating and cooling systems."

Further pointing out the importance of a capable workforce in science and technology fields, the Congressman noted that the Bureau of Labor Statistics has projected science and engineering occupations to grow by 21.4 percent from 2004 to 2014 as compared to a growth of 13 percent for all other occupations during the same timeframe. The United States must improve its educational system to attract more talent to these careers and to ensure Americans qualify for jobs in growing fields. As of 2001, less than ten percent of all bachelor and graduate degrees awarded in our country related to engineering, math or physical sciences, a 50 percent decline since 1960.

"I am proud to have cosponsored, and worked this session in the Education and Labor Committee on, the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act, which, in addition to investing significantly in college scholarships, provides $7 billion for grants to states and institutions of higher education to overhaul community colleges," said Congressman Sestak. "If more institutions follow Delaware County Community College's lead, America will be at the forefront of green energy and other new technology industries."